ETHNOGRAPHY OF HINDUSTAN

PREFATORY REMARKS

[The author's object in writing this account is to show that the Hindu religion has true and sublime conceptions of the Deity.]

[P. 1] It has long been the ambitious desire of my heart to pass in review to some extent, the general conditions of this vast country, and to record the opinions professed by the majority of the learned among the Hindus. I know not whether the love of my native land has been the attracting influence or exactness of historical research and genuine truthfulness of narrative, for Banākiti, Hāfiz Abru and other ancient chroniclers have indulged in vain imaginings and recorded stories that have no foundation in fact. Nor were the motives altogether these, but rather that when I had arisen from the close retirement of studious application and discovered somewhat of the ignorance and dissensions of men I formed the design of establishing peace and promoting concord. My original desire now renewed its possession of me, but a multiplicity of occupations prevented its gratification until the turns of fate brought about the composition of this striking record which has already branched out into such numerous details. Although my pen had occupied itself with the description of the Subahs and had briefly recorded the annals of Hindustan, and now that the ambition of my heart had attained the time of its realisation, not content with [P. 2] the information I had already acquired, I had recourse to the knowledge of others and set myself to gather instruction from men of true learning. As I was unfamiliar with the science of terms in the Sanskrit language and a competent interpreter was not available, the labour of repeated translations had to be undertaken, until by good fortune and my own steadfastness of purpose, my object was at length

attained. It then became clear that the commonly received opinion that Hindus associate a plurality of gods with the One Supreme Being has not the full illumination of truth, for although with regard to some points and certain conclusions, there is room for controversy, yet the worship of one God and the profession of His Unity among this people appeared facts convincingly attested.[1] It was indispensable in me, therefore, to bring into open evidence the system of philosophy, the degrees of self-discipline, and the gradations of rite and usage of this race in order that hostility towards them might abate and the temporal sword be stayed awhile from the shedding of blood, that dissensions within and without be turned to peace and the thornbrake of strife and enmity bloom into a garden of concord. Assemblies for the discussion of arguments might then be formed and gatherings of science suitably convened.

[*The various causes of misunderstanding and quarrels between different religions in India.*]

Notwithstanding that at all periods of time, excellent resolutions and well-intentioned designs are to be witnessed and the extent of the world is never lacking in prudent men, why does misunderstanding arise and what are the causes of contention?

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[1] This is confirmed by Colebrooke. "The real doctrine of the Indian Scripture is the unity of the Deity, in whom the universe is comprehended; and the seeming polytheism which it exhibits, offers the elements and the stars and planets as gods. The three principal manifestations of the divinity, with other personified attributes and most of the other gods of Hindu mythology, are indicated in the Veda. But the worship of deified heroes is no part of the system: nor are the incarnations of deities suggested in any portion of the text which I have yet seen, though such are sometimes hinted at by commentators." H. H. Wilson in commenting on this passage admits that the worship of the Vedas is for the most part domestic, addressed to unreal presences and not to visible types, and not idolatry. *Vishnu. P.* Pref. ii. [H. S. J.] See also Max Muller on *henotheism*, and Hastings, *Encyclopædia of Religion*, vi. 283 and 289; viii. 810-811. [*J. Sarkar.*]

The *First* cause is the diversity of tongues and the misapprehension of mutual purposes, and thus the alloy of ill-will is introduced and the dust of discord arises.

Secondly, the distance that separates the learned of Hindustan from scientific men of other nationalities who thus are unable to meet, and if chance should bring them together, the need of an interpreter would preclude any practical result. An accomplished linguist capable of mastering the intricacies of science and the abstruse speculations of philosophy among various nations and competent to give them luminous and efficient expression, is very rare. Even at the present time, when through His Majesty's patronage of learning and his appreciation of merit, the erudite of all countries are assembled, and apply themselves with united effort in the pursuit of truth, so proficient a person is not to be found. Such as thirst after the sweet waters of wisdom and who leaving their native land undertake the wanderings of travel and with diligent assiduity employ their energies in the acquisition of various languages, are indeed uncommon. It needs a seeker such as Anushirwān, who amidst the pomp of empire should yet search for the jewel of wisdom, and a minister like Buzurjmihr, void of envy, as his counsellor, and both king and minister combined, to discover a coadjutor so unique and one so upright and intelligent as the physician Barzawaih, and then to send him with abundant means disguised as a merchant to Hindustan in order that with this capital stock-in-trade he might obtain the interest of acquired wisdom; and again this sagacious personage, making no distinction between the absence or presence of his employers, must be diligent in his inquiries and succeed in the accomplishment of his desire through the frankness of his demeanour and his largesse of gold. Or the occasion would demand an indefatigable and lofty intellect like that of Tumtum the Indian, who to receive the instruction of the divine philosopher Plato, passed from Hindustan into Greece and freighting

his caravans with the requisites of travel, set himself to face the dangers of seas and deserts, and with the medicinal simples of wisdom perfected his spiritual health and the harmonious [P. 3] balance of his soul. Or a powerful mind and vigorous body such as Abu Maashar of Balkh, enamoured of wisdom, who holding exile and his native country and toil and ease undissociated, travelled into India from Khorāsān and garnered a store of knowledge at Benares and carried it as a gift of price to the learned of his own land.

Thirdly, the absorption of mankind in the delights of corporeal gratification, for men regard the absence of beauty in an object as placing it beyond the pale of existence and therefore not to be thought of as worth acquisition or productive of enjoyment. Their fastidiousness is averse from listening to accounts of foreign peoples even by way of apologue. And forasmuch as their moral obliquity refuses to lend an ear and the glitter of this deceptive world lets fall a veil of ignorance before their eyes, what must be their state and how may grace illumine for them the lamp of guidance?

Fourthly, indolence. Men account what is ready to hand as more precious than the chance of future possession and prefer ease to exertion. They will not undertake the trouble of profound investigation, and content with a superficial view, will not move a span's length to acquire a deeper insight. He alone is the true promoter of wisdom who, setting before his resolve the investigation of the concealed beauties of meaning, under the guidance of assiduous research and undaunted desire, plants his foot in the dread wilds of research, and reaches the goal of his ambition undismayed by countless labours, sustaining the burden of the road by the force of capacity on the shoulders of his ever resolute will.

Fifthly, the blowing of the chill blast of inflexible custom and the low flicker of the lamp of wisdom. From immemorial time the exercise of inquiry has been restricted, and questioning and investigation have been regarded as precursors

of infidelity. Whatever has been received from father, director, kindred, friend or neighbour, is considered as a deposit under Divine sanction and a malcontent is reproached with impiety or irreligion. Although the few among the intelligent of their generation admit the imbecility of this procedure in others, yet will they not stir one step in a practical direction themselves.

[*It is only by meeting on a common platform of study and discussion that different religions can be correctly understood and their true worth appreciated. This book will promote that aim.*]

Sixthly, the uprising of the whirlwind of animosity and the storms of persecution have stayed the few earnest inquirers from uniting to discuss their individual tenets and from meeting in friendly assemblies in a spirit of sympathy, and from distinguishing[2] commonalty of bond from vital estrangement, under the guidance of impartiality, in order that error may be severed from truth and the why and the wherefore weighed in the scales of sound judgment. Even just monarchs, unconscious of their obligations, have herein neglected them. Arrogance and self-interest have intervened and occasions of intercourse have been marred by perplexities. Some have taken refuge in silence; others have found evasion in obscurity of language, while others again have extricated themselves by time-serving utterances. If temporal rulers had interested themselves in this matter and assuaged the apprehensions of men, assuredly many enlightened persons would have delivered their real sentiments with calmness of mind and freedom of expression. Through the apathy of princes, each sect is bigoted to its own creed and dissensions [P. 4] have waxed high. Each one regarding his own persuasion as alone true, has set himself to the persecution of

[2] I select a variant relegated to the notes, in place of the text, and amend the doubtful reading that follows by omitting the *be* before *āzaram*. With this alteration the difficulty is cleared and its simplicity recommends the correction.

other worshippers of God, and the shedding of blood and the ruining of reputation have become symbols of religious orthodoxy. Were the eyes of the mind possessed of true vision, each individual would withdraw from this indiscriminating turmoil and attend rather to his own solicitudes than interfere in the concerns of others. Amidst such unseemly discord, main purposes are set aside and arguments disregarded. If the doctrine of an enemy be in itself good, why should hands be stained in the blood of its professors? And even were it otherwise, the sufferer from the malady of folly deserves commiseration, not hostility and the shedding of his blood.

Seventhly, the prosperity of wretches without principle who deceitfully win acceptance by affected virtue and rectitude. Such as these do much harm and truths are obscured through unrecognition.

Cease, Abul Fazal, cease! The manifestations of divine wrath are illimitable and infinite are the marvels of their record. Loose not thy hand from the cord of peace seized by thy good intention. Follow out thy long projected design. Though some of thy hearers will attain to wisdom and meet in rejoicing union, yet many will fall into sorrows and reap bewilderment. Thanks be to God that thou art not a hostage to the lament of ignorance nor the extoller of those that are in bonds.

deeds, praying that the conqueror would not desecrate the tomb. Bahman, struck by the sight of these splendid offerings and the prescient sagacity of the gift, fell into a profound melancholy and withdrew from his previous resolve.

Faramarz, indeed, had twice entered this country, for Rustam after his combat with Barzu by whose mace his arm had been disabled, said to Kaikhusrau, "if my son Faramarz returns this night from India, he will deal with Barzu," upon which followed his sudden arrival and the overthrow of the latter.

ALEXANDER OF GREECE.

When Alexander had completed the conquest of Irān and Turān and laid the foundations of Marv, Herāt and Samarqand, he entered India by Ghaznin and in the neighbourhood of the Panjāb gave battle to the Hindu prince, Porus, who had advanced from Kanauj to engage him, and by stratagem put him to rout. From thence he turned to the country of the Brāhmans. The chiefs of that region represented to him that if the conqueror sought riches and worldly goods they were destitute of these.

> Wisdom and knowledge dwell with us, nor cease
> To fill our bosoms with untroubled peace:
> The earth a couch, the skies their covering lend,
> So turn our thoughts to our appointed end.[12]

"If thy design be the gathering of knowledge and the search for truth, let those who seek it come not in this guise." Alexander, therefore, leaving his army, set out at the head of a few followers. A court was held to secure a just hearing and their peculiar views were discussed in audience. The king approved their speech and conduct and announced to them that whatever they desired should be granted. They

[12] These lines are taken from Firdausi and vary somewhat from the ordinary text, where they are not consecutive. The substance of a great deal of what follows in the reply of the Brahmans, is from the same sources.

replied that they had no other wish than that the king should live for ever. He answered that this wish was inconsistent with mortality. They rejoined: "If the instability of worldly things is so evident to your Majesty, why these fatigues in the tyrannous oppression of mankind?" Alexander for a space bowed his head in humiliation and imputed his actions to the decrees of fate.

According to some Christian[13] writers, when the standards of Alexander were raised on the shores of the Indian Ocean, accounts of the island of the Brāhmans reached him and he determined to take possession of it. They sent an envoy to him and made the following representation:—"Sovereign ruler of the world! The fame of thy conquests and thy successes has been constantly in our ears, but what can content a man to whom the possession of the world is insufficient? We enjoy no outward splendour, nor bodily vigour that thou shouldst deem us worthy to measure thy prowess in war. The worldly goods that we own are shared in common amongst us, and we are passing rich on what may satisfy our hunger. Our costliest robes are garments worn with age. Our women are not in bondage to adornment for the seduction of hearts, and account no beauty or charm of price, save [197] that inherited from their mothers. Of our lowly habitations we ask but two things, a shelter in life and in death a grave. We have a king for considerations of dignity, not for the administration of justice or law. What

[13] The term *tarsā* which I have rendered in its usual acceptation may be also applied to the Zoroastrians. For *tarsā*, see Hastings, *Encyclopœdia of Religion*, iii. 576. For the general idea of the letters, Abul Fazl is indebted to Firdausi, who in turn in one passage regarding the unprofitable questions put by Alexander to confound the Brāhmans, is in agreement with Plutarch. The *jazira* or isle of the Brāhmans is perhaps Brāhmanābād, identified by Genl. Cunningham as the town where Ptolemy was wounded by a poisoned sword (Quintus Curtius IX. 8), the Harmatelia of Diodorus, described by him as the last town of the Brāhmans on the river. For the Islamic traditions about Alexander, see *Encyclo. Islam*, ii. 533 (Iskandar).

use would punishment serve in a land where none is wicked and there is no thought of crime?" The sagacious monarch was struck by this affecting address and leaving them their freedom, abandoned his project.

The following letter was addressed by Alexander to Didim, the head of the Brāhmans; for he had often heard that they did not live as other men. The novelty excited his wonder and made his life seem insupportable to him[14]:—"O Didim, after learning thy message, I desire again to be informed of thy precepts and doctrines. If what thou hast represented bears the light of truth and is the result of experience, answer speedily, so that, putting this system to the proof, I also for justice sake and in search of truth, may follow thy footsteps." Didim thus replied: "What I have stated results from profound knowledge. You have not chosen to believe in its truth and you reject what you do not incline to. Many blameable actions were favourably represented by you in our interview. Now, therefore, with full knowledge believe my words. Hirābud, the Brāhman, does not yield to the promptings of desire. Content with the measure of his needs, he opens not the door of greed.[15] Our food is

[14] This crabbed and obscurely-worded sentence is capable of a different, but in my opinion, not so satisfactory an interpretation. The name *Didim* in the text is not in Firdausi. It occurs in Plutarch (Alex. LXXXVI.) and in Arrian (Anab. VII. 2) as *Dandamis*; in Strabo (LXIV.) as *Mandanis*. The name is most probably *Dandin*, meaning an ascetic who always carries a rod in his hand after his initiation. Mandanis is evidently an error; there was a real Hindu scholar bearing the name *Mandan Mishra* who figures in the stories of Sankarāchārya's disputations, but that was in the 8th century *after* Christ. [J. Sarkar.]

[15] This probably refers to the embassy of Onesicritus to the Gymnosophists, who endeavoured to persuade some of them to return with him to Alexander's camp. Plutarch says that Calanus insolently told him to divest himself of his robe in order to hear his precepts in nakedness, symbolical doubtless of humility and ignorance. He was however induced by Taxila to visit Alexander who retained him in his suite with distinguished favour. His self-chosen death by burning at Pasargadæ in Persia, when suffering from a fit of cholic, is told by Arrian [Bk. vii. ch. 3 and 18], Diodorus, and Plutarch.

not such as the four elements cannot easily supply. The earth gives us of its produce. In our meals intemperance has no place, for this reason we have no need of medicine or physician, and thus we enjoy perpetual well-being. We are not indebted to each other for assistance. We Brāhmans have equality in all things; what room then is there for indigence? In a land where the seeds of arrogance and vain glory grow not, universal poverty is consummate fortune. We have no governor, for our actions are not subjects for penal inquiry. We disapprove of a variety of creeds for they are produced through exceeding unrighteousness and manifold iniquities. Our only religion is the worship of conscience. From what it restrains us we withhold our hearts. We do not submit to the tyranny of the pursuit of wealth for it fosters greed and brings disappointment in its train. We disdain idleness and hold it in reproach. We are not rendered averse from the delights of wedlock by incapacity, for all things are in our power as we can also forego them. From the sun we receive warmth, from the dews moisture. Our thirst is quenched from the stream and we have no couch but the earth. Desire does not rob us of sleep, nor leave us a prey to care. We lord it not over our equals through pride; we seek service from none save of our own bodies, for we consider the body subservient to the spirit. We bake not stone in the fire for the raising of palaces, for we dwell in the hollows of the earth according to the measure of our needs, nor do we go in fear of the violence of the wind nor of storms of dust, for there we are safer than in houses of reed. We wear no costly robes; we cover our nakedness with leaves, or to speak truly, with modesty; our women are at no pains for their adornment, for who can add beauty to the creations of God? and after they are arrayed [198] it profiteth them nothing. Our sexual commerce cometh not sinfully from carnal desire, but continuance of the race is kept in view. We are not prone to violence and we lay the

dust of discord by the agency of right conduct, and though dependent on the guidance of destiny we do not resign ourselves to inactivity. Over our head we erect no edifices in the guise of temples of worship. Give your commands to those who have flung wide for themselves the door of avarice and make their treasure of the things of this world. The ravages of pestilence do not reach us for we defile not the skirts of heaven with evil deeds. We are prepared to meet the vicissitudes of the seasons, and thus summer's heat and winter's cold distress us not, and therefore we live careless of the exigencies of those times. We do not deaden our minds with games and shows of elephants and horses and with dancing, and when a desire for worldly pageants seizes us, the sight of the record of your actions withholds us therefrom, and recalling your deeds which indeed more deserve a smile, we are moved to many tears. Worldly splendours make us rejoice in another spectacle, for amidst the varied beauties of the universe, the heavens glowing with the radiance of their myriad stars, the sea, coloured by its skies, that clasps in a fond embrace its sister earth, the revel of its fish that leap in play from its foam-tossing waves, fill our eyes with delight. Wandering through the woods with the fragrance of flowers and by running springs in the shade of abundant trees gladdens us in a hunderd ways, while the sweet songs of birds render us unenvious of all the festal banquets of the rich. Such is the theatre we possess, to share in the enjoyment of which is difficult, to erase it from our minds, a crime. We plough not the seas in barks and vessels. Our hearts are not aflame with passion for the beauty of others, and we affect not the language of flattery or eloquence. The redundance of professed eulogists obtains no credit in this land, for the practice of this base crew which gives to the creature the praise due to God and overlays the purity of faith with error, darkens celestial light with reprehensible

deeds. Of a truth you are the most unfortunate of mankind for your worship is sinful and your life is chastisement."

The monarch thus replied: "If your language reflects the light of truth, I should infer that the Brāhmans alone are robed in the true characteristics of humanity and that this sect are to be regarded as incorporeal spirits. To hold as altogether unlawful the acts of the natural man is either to be God or to be envious of the Supreme Being. In short these principles, in my opinion, proceed from madness not from the fulness of wisdom. O, Didim, I have not fixed my abode in this hired dwelling, nor made of a passing-rest-house a settled habitation, but prudently looking on myself as a sojourner, hasten, unencumbered with guilt, to my true country. This language is not the making of self a god, but like dark-minded bigots that are enemies to their own happiness, I do not affect to make the attributes of the Creator the instruments of my salvation. And whosoever under the guidance of a wakeful fortune, abandoning sinful actions, walks in the way of virtue is not a god, but by means of the grace of that Supreme Lord, rises above his fellow men." The writer [P. 199] continued: "My royal master observes that you call yourselves fortunate in that you have chosen a retired spot of earth where the comings and goings of those without and the busy movement of the world are not heard, and that you consider this praiseworthy as proceeding from your attachment to your hearths and love of your native land. The lowliness and poverty that you cannot avoid is not worthy of commendation: on the contrary, the Almighty has inflicted this as a punishment for your evil deeds. True merit consists in living abstemiously amid abundant fortune, for ignorance and want cannot exhibit the lustre of virtue. The first cannot see what to avoid, the second has not the means by which it may possess. I, who with all the resources of pleasure and enjoyment at my command,

have refrained from them altogether and have sternly chosen a life of toil, am more deserving of a glorious reward."

Some say that after his victory over Porus, Alexander heard that at the extremity of India, reigned a king called Kayd,[16] possessed of many virtues, and who for three hundred years had passed a blameless life. To him he despatched a letter that appealed to his hopes and fears. The king read the letter and thus replied: "I have heard of the successes of your Majesty and would deem the honour of a personal visit the source of fortune, but stricken in years, strength fails me. If my excuse is accepted, I will send as an offering four matchless treasures which are the pride of my life; an accomplished and virtuous maiden of incomparable beauty; a sage unequalled in penetrating the secrets of the heart; a physician, in healing as the Messiah; a cup which though drunk from is inexhaustible. Alexander accepted the gifts and despatched Balinās with some experienced associates to bring them. The envoy returned to the court with these treasures of price together with forty elephants of which three were white, and numerous other presents. Alexander first essayed to test the Hindu sage. He sent him a bowl full of clarified butter. The sage thrust a few needles therein and sent it back. Alexander fused the needles and forming the metal into a ball returned it to him. The sage fashioning of this a mirror, again sent it back. Alexander placed it in a basin full of water and despatched it once more. The sage made of the mirror a drinking cup and set it upon the water of the basin. The monarch filled it with earth and returned it. At the sight of this, the sage fell into a profound melancholy and bitterly reproached himself and directed it to be carried back. Alexander was perplexed at this action. The

[16] This story is told at considerable length by Masaudi in the 26th Chapter of the 'Meadows of Gold'. The king's name is there Kend. Firdausi's version is somewhat different, but the name is Kayd, as in the text.

next day he held an assembly of the learned to discuss these mysteries. The seer was introduced and honourably received. He was of prepossessing exterior, with a noble brow, tall and powerfully made. Alexander on seeing him, thus reflected: "If to such a presence, he also unites a lofty wisdom, quickness of penetration and strength of will, he is unparalleled in his generation." The sage read his hidden thoughts and making a circuit of his face with his forefinger rested it on the point of his nose. When asked for an explanation, he replied: "I understood your Majesty's reflections and by this gesture I meant to express that as the nose in the face is one, I also am unique in my time." He was then required to expound the enigmas of the preceding day. He answered: "Your Majesty wished to signify the profundity of your wisdom, for as the bowl was full so the royal mind was filled with various knowledge and could contain no more. I, on the other hand, showed that as needles could find a place therein, so could other lore find room in your mind. By fashioning the ball your Majesty's intention was to discover that the clearness of your intellect was not like the bowl of butter in which other things could be contained, but resembled a ball of steel. The construction into a mirror signified that though steel be hard, it is capable of such polish as to reflect the face. By your sinking the mirror in water, I understood the shortness of life and the vast extent of knowledge. By fashioning it into a cup, I answered that what sank in water might with skill be made to float; thus also immense erudition may be acquired by severe application and the shortness of life be prolonged. The filling it with earth implied that the end of all things is death, and the return to earth. This was capable of no answer, and I was silent." Alexander praised his sagacity and penetration and said: "The profit that I have reaped from India has been my meeting with thee." He took him into his companionship and intimacy and parted from him only when he left

India. The other three treasures also were subjected to a similar ordeal and their worth approved.

Some writers narrate the history of Porus after the particulars regarding Kayd, and state that he fled without fighting to distant parts and that his dominions were conferred upon another.

MANI THE PAINTER.[1]

His presumption led him to claim the authority of a prophet and he composed a work which he pretended had come down from heaven affirming also that he was the Paraclete announced by the Messiah; Sāpur, the son of Ardshir Bābagān favoured him. It was not long before his imposture was discovered and he was condemned to death, but he contrived to escape by flight. For a time he remained in Kashmir and from thence entered India where his doctrines received some acceptance. From thence he went to Turkistān and China and resided chiefly in the eastern parts till his wanderings brought him to a mountain where he discovered a cave which was untrodden by human foot, and to this he brought provisions sufficient for a year. One day, in the course of conversation, he said to his followers: "I have been summoned to heaven where I shall remain for a twelve-

[1] This account appears to be taken from Khondemir and agrees in the main with D'Herbelot's sketch from the same historian. Firdausi makes him a native of China and places his death in the reign of Shāhpur by whom, he says, Mani was flayed alive and his skin stuffed with straw as a warning to his followers. The Manichean sect takes its rise from this impostor who, according to D'Herbelot, was a Christian priest in the province of Ahwāz and had many controversies with the Jews and Magians and maintained the Indian doctrine of metempsychosis. He named twelve apostles to preach his doctrines in India and China, and gave them his book called the "Anghelion". "Anghelion, c'est à dire l'Evangile." One of his principles was abstinence from all flesh, and he forbade the taking of animal life. He admitted two principles of good and evil and the dual soul, one bad and created with the body by the evil principle, and the other the good created by the good principle. He denied free-will and the necessity of baptism. *Dabistan* (Shea and Troyer), i. 205. Hastings, *Encyclo.* viii. 396.